

*RECEIVED February 20, 2024 @8:30AM
Kimberly Keil, Assistant Redding Town Clerk
3 pages*

**Commission on Aging
Date: February 14, 2024
Location: Heritage Center
Time: 9:00**

Present: COA Commissioners: Ruth Moran (chair), Kathy Brandt, Sarah Atwood, Sal Armato, Jan August (co-chair), Sarah Cummings, Mary Dale Lancaster, Peter Cody, Peggy Zamore, Garner Lester, Sarah Atwood

Staff: Angelica Fontanez, Margherita Pilato

Members of the Public: Tina Armato, Florisa Zhingini, Denise Cesareo, Rocco Valuzzo (Sentinel)

Meeting called to order: 9:03

- 1. Approval of the Minutes:** Unanimous
- 2. Public Comments:** Tina Armato (creator of the BLAST for Redding Seniors)– spoke about the Blast Newsletter. Changes in Mac computer protocol and use of Constant Contact requires the purchase of a new program such as Adobe Illustrator Suite (minimum required) or, for more functionality, Design Suite. Tina personally owns a series of 100,000 pics, they can no longer be used with present program. Because many seniors are not computer savvy, or get sidelined by issues opening their emails, Tina also suggested doing a limited physical mailing and have hard copies available. Constant Contact is managed by Rob Blick (and through town) – lots of emails end up in Spam. May want to study other means of e-mail communication. Fundraising could raise monies needed for the software and mailing. Business and individual sponsors may be sought.
- 3. Social Services Report:** Angelica Fontanez. See Report. Oil assistance is active. Steady donations. Lots of local meetings. Redding Coalition – Meredith Schuchard (Redding Boys and Girls Club) leading formation of a Redding group that addresses mental health and substance abuse issues for people of all ages – Social Services part of that group. ARPA grant finally approved for the Van. As per Julia, additional paperwork still needs to be completed. When done, 2 vans will be available for senior center use. The first driver's salary is supplemented through state grant – such grant has parameters that limit where van may be driven. The second van may have different parameters, allowing for different travel radius.

4. Director of Programming: Margherita Pilato. See Report. Some program participation was down for January; however, there was a lot of illness in both the instructor and participant community. Attendance appears to be picking up again. Grant from Ridgefield Thrift Shop has been applied toward popular cultural and educational programs. Margherita has once again reapplied for Ridgefield Thrift Shop grant again to use toward a dedicated technology instructor. Previously we've had high school student provide help, but there is a need among seniors for regular help. IT from town is terrific, but senior IT person would help with individual programs, i.e. peer to peer programs. Suggested: have dedicated "Tech Time" offered at set intervals.

5. First Selectman: Julia Pemberton. Julia has a liaison who can be contacted if there is an issue with serious Optimum service problems (i.e. no one will show up for one month). Frontier (fiber optics) is now wired throughout town with greater efficiency in service. Frontier owns all of the poles in town. - Income from classes at the Heritage Center is well above what is needed to cover the Heritage Center's costs. Query whether the town should cover all program expenses for seniors as so many Medicare Advantage programs cover many fitness programs for free at other facilities. Does the fee charged by the Heritage Center discourage participation? Discussion followed. Senior programming covers a wide range of programs. Quality of local programs brings in folks who may not go other places. Heritage Center serves residents who would otherwise not participate in any programs. If payment is a factor, one may confidentially apply for assistance. Heritage Center offers community, warmth and interaction. (NB: Silver Sneakers only covers fitness centers, and is not taking any new applicants). - Community Study will review infrastructure of all of Redding's recreational activities to serve entire community's needs and wants. \$80,000 fee for study may be covered by unused ARPA funds. Improved facilities, in turn, could expand usage of RCC. Focus to include what is offered/available at the RCC – (i.e. showers) that may limit its use. Questions to be addressed: should we renovate, bond, etc. Will take into account other local clubs that provide activities and their needs for building space. - Public Safety is another area to be formally studied – our fire departments are all volunteer, and to meet the 10-minute proper response time can be challenging. Study to determine what needs to be done. - Walking Path: lots of bureaucracy, lack of staff at state level to address this project. But see: a new state project manager finally assigned in December. Two RFP's (for General Contractors) have applied, interviews are scheduled.

6. Chair's Report: Ruth Moran. FOIA presentation on March 11. Very informative and useful for our Committee to understand communications protocols. - Questions re: new membership on the COA and who might want to join next year. Discussion ensued.

7. Old Business: Food and Fellowship – Ideas re: food programs. Will discuss types of events re: food with staff. Will take an informal survey re: food events to see what is and

what might be offered. Food events are very popular and contribute to the vitality of Senior Center.

Transportation Study Group. Will study major categories - What do we need to find out, actions to take now, long term goals. Find out what other towns are doing, as well as look into other systems within our own town.

Alternate monthly between Communication and Aging, and Food/Fellowship and Transportation

Anne Hughes plans to come to a COA meeting in later winter or early spring.

8. New Business: Sarah Cummings – Pages Turned book created for 100th anniversary of Mark Twain Library with historical remembrances of Redding. COA contributed to its creation. Full of great information. - Cupboard on upper left side of sink area of Multi-Purpose room for archive of COA materials. - Need a licensed MD or APRN to serve as Medical Director for Redding. Can live outside Redding. Reach out if anyone can help - Helpers for the Redding Parade Path needed – paid position. - Reminder to change batteries in smoke and CO2 for time change. Smoke detectors, for those who don't have them, can be installed by Fire Department.

9. Meeting adjourned: 10:50.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, March 13, 2024 at 9 am at the Heritage Center.

Minutes taken by Mary Dale Lancaster